



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, October 15, 2015 Meeting  
4:45pm-6:30pm in Willard Straight Hall Memorial Room

### I. Call to Order (J. Batista)

- J. Batista called the meeting to order at 4:48pm
- *Present at the Roll Call:* B. Bacharach [2]; J. Batista [0]; L. Bushner [2.5]; M. Chak [1.5]; S. Chaudhary [2]; J. Chessin [0.5]; V. Devatha [1]; R. Dunbar [1.5]; M. Ghandour [2.5]; E. Johnston [0.5]; S. Karnavat [2]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; C. Li [1.5]; D. Li [3.5]; D. Liu [0]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [0]; P. Russell [0]; J. Selig [2.5]; M. Stefanko [2]; S. Tayal [3]; K. Zhu [1]
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* R. Gupta (Unexcused) [1.5]; E. Liu (Unexcused) [3]; P. Titcomb (Unexcused) [3]; R. Uttamchandani (Unexcused) [2.5]

### II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (J. Batista)

### III. Open Microphone (E. Johnston)

### IV. Announcements and Reports

- Mental Health Awareness Week – UA Representative and Ex-Officio M. Indimine announced that Mental Health Awareness Week would begin tomorrow, Friday October 16<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged that members show their support for the week's events, including PostSecret's creator who would be speaking in Bailey Hall.
- Mental Health Awareness Week and International Booth – S. Tayal stated the International Student Union would be working alongside the Student Assembly to host a booth for Mental Health Awareness Week. He stated the booth would need volunteers and would allow students to send postcards to anyone around the world.
- Sexual Assault Policy – D. Li noted she is working with the Faculty Senate to create legislation regarding relationships between undergraduates and their authority figures. She hoped to get greater community input relating to protocol for dealing with these types of relationships.
- Change in Dining Policy – J. Chessin addressed the Assembly regarding the dining policy, which serves less meat. He stated G. Kaufman met with the head of dining

where they compromised by continuing to serve the same amount, yet increased meat portions can be requested.

## V. Business of the Day

- Byline Report: Cornell Cinema
  - M. Stefanko stated that additional information was handed out, not to be included in formal byline request. He mentioned the difference between cutting and maintaining funding. He stated the committee values the Cinema as the fourth most worthy of funding.
  - Douglas McLaren '05 communicated that during his time working for Cornell Cinema, the theater operated seven days a week. He reiterated a quote from *The New Yorker* that read, “Universities are one of the few areas in American culture and really Western culture where market logic doesn’t trump everything else.”
  - B. Bacharach stated the issue relates to the lack of arts on campus. He believed that it might be the role of the administration to fund these groups. He further asked about advertising and what the Cinema would be willing to cut.
  - S. Tayal stated Cornell Cinema largely supports diversity education and Cornell’s motto “Any person, any study”. He stated there was large cultural significance in this funded group, and requested a \$0.30 increase.
  - M. Stefanko stated the Cinema uniquely identifies what the Student Assembly values and what they should be in charge of funding. He expressed that other groups on campus have paid staff that are funded by the university, and if other groups had to pay staff with Byline funding, funding would be greatly contested. He still believed the organization could cut programming costs.
  - D. McLaren stated it would be difficult to get rid of their Graphic Designer. He stated no student would be willing to involve himself or herself at the same level as their part time employee.
  - Kramer Canfield '19 addressed the mistaken belief that Netflix could fill the role of the Cinema. He stated the cinema has a much wider audience and that people can plan an event around going to a movie.
  - Rohan Bhatia '16 stated he was an Appropriations Committee member not on the Student Assembly. When making their decision, he saw Cornell Cinemas request for more money while maintaining the same number of programs to be difficult to support. He believed if the Appropriations Committee granted the Cinema more money this would lead to a slippery slope where other groups would continue to request more money without plans to increase their outreach.
  - M. Stefanko declared the current level forces the Cinema to prioritize their costs.

- D. McLaren stated that their funding request was not for “sexy” projects. He announced that the Cinema will not fold without increased funding, but they will be facing debts of \$1,000 to \$2,000 over the next two years.
- D. Li acknowledged the cultural diversity brought by the Cinema. She asked why the Cinema does not charge for advanced-screenings, and stated a \$0.30 increase would be a good number.
- D. McLaren answered that advanced-screening can’t charge due to their contracts. He stated a \$0.30 increase would be reasonable, and would help the Cinema not ask for an increase during the next Byline Cycle.
- Georgina Hudja ‘18 a member of the Appropriations Committee asked about reaching out to certain communities. Instead of having a \$16,000 graphic designer she suggested multiple students work together to do the same job.
- M. Stefanko hoped that if there were a \$0.30 increase, in two years the Byline funding level would not be increased again.
- Elijah Weber-Han ‘16 read a significant list of groups that the Cornell Cinema has worked with.
- There was a motion to **overturn**.
- The motion was **approved** by a vote of 19-2-1.
- Ex-Officio M. Battaglia asked about the Appropriation Committee’s vote of 6-7-1 on \$11.10.
- David Gouldthorpe ’17 thanked the Assembly for overturning the Appropriation Committee’s decision.
- M. Stefanko stated \$11.10 was an amount requested with the belief that it could make up for a ticket price of \$6.00, and would create a greater amount of funding in the Cinema’s account. M. Stefanko further proclaimed that \$10.60 would be a good level to fund at, as it would solve issues the Cinema previously discussed.
- D. McLaren stated the Cornell Cinema currently relies heavily on cash donations. He requested a greater amount than \$0.30, as it would move the Cinema away from unknown revenue sources in the future.
- J. Chessin requested a funding level of \$11.00. He stated that as a group in a deficit the organization should focus on getting a larger audience, and should show more educational films. He further asserted a member of the Student Assembly should serve on the Cinema’s board.
- Wyatt Nelson ’16 addressed the Assembly stating that more oversight should continue to exist over the Appropriation Committee’s decisions.
- M. McBride worried about the organization’s future and requested an increase of \$0.50.

- Christian Brickhouse quoted David Skorton who said, “It is through the study of art, music, literature, history and other humanities and social sciences that we gain a greater understanding of the human condition.” He expressed the need of art, and reiterated that Cornell Cinema requested the full amount of \$12.00.
  - M. Stefanko stated that cuts help fund other new and innovative organizations.
  - There was a motion to call the question.
  - There was dissent.
  - The motion failed by a vote of 11-7-3.
  - Yana Makuwa '16 proclaimed there is a fear over funding the organization, because it will set a precedent, but she asserted that funding the Cinema now would allow the group more time to push the university directly for more funding.
  - Nathan Chazan '19 stated that even with playing blockbuster movies, it is difficult to say how many people will attend each movie.
  - M. Stefanko stated that \$0.30 cents would be in the more appropriate range than \$0.50.
  - B. Bacharach stated the current discussion should be over giving financial advice and figuring out the appropriate funding for the next two years. He further asked what the Cinema would spend the extra money on.
  - There was a motion to call the question.
  - There was dissent.
  - B. Bacharach wanted his questions addressed.
  - The motion failed by a vote of 13-8-0.
  - M. Stefanko stated that the two numbers he wanted to vote on would be a \$0.30 and \$0.50 increase.
  - There was a motion to call the question on \$11.10, \$11.00, and \$10.90.
  - M. Stefanko asked a point of information over why \$11.00 was proposed.
  - J. Battista stated past precedent granted every proposed amount a vote.
  - There was dissent.
  - There was a motion to hold a roll call vote.
  - There was dissent.
  - J. Selig stated roll call votes are politically incriminating.
  - The motion to roll call vote failed by a vote of 3-15-3.
  - \$11.10 failed by a vote of 9-12-0.
  - \$11.00 failed by a vote of 11-9-2.
  - \$10.90 was approved by a vote of 18-3-0.
- There was a motion to suspend the agenda.

- The agenda was suspended by unanimous consent.
- There was a motion to move Resolution 16 to the top of the agenda.
  - The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.
- Resolution 16: Addressing Labor Issues in Qatar (Paul Russell)
  - This resolution asks Cornell to do a formal investigation into the working conditions at Cornell's school in Qatar.
  - P. Russell stated Cornell Organization for Labor Action has been a large supporter of this resolution. He stated a year ago the International Trade Union Confederation sent a letter to Cornell University and other schools with satellite campuses in Qatar. The letter acknowledged labor malpractices, which were occurring in Education City, Qatar.
  - Michael Ferrer '16 stated the International Trade Union Confederation is one of the largest unions in the world. He stated their report cited five separate examples of issues on Cornell University's Qatar campus. Issues such as cramped housing, workers salaries being half of what was promised, wage theft, withholding of passports
  - Allison Lapehn '18 explained that through the call system, Qatar could withhold immigrant worker rights, disallowing the formation of unions and granting labor contracts to subcontractors. Subcontractors for Cornell University have hired workers on their own, diffusing the level of clarity over worker rights.
  - M. Ferrer noted the administration has continued to claim that labor workers are not exploited. He stated that Cornell subcontracts to the Qatar foundation, an organization known to have a history of labor abuse.
  - A. Lapehn mentioned that in fear of future poor publicity the sponsors would like to take action as soon as possible.
  - R. Dunbar asked to learn what the kafala system is.
  - A. Lapehn stated the kafala system is used to keep migrant workers from gaining rights. Under this system money has to be held in Qatari bank accounts, which can be difficult to access.
  - M. Ferrer stated the Qatar Foundation roughly paid eight million for Cornell to build a campus partnership. Moza bint Nasser, the second Sheikha of Qatar, manages the Qatar Foundation. She additionally is affiliated with gay conversion camps and has played a large part in bringing FIFA to Qatar.
  - Y. Bhandari stated as an ILR student she is happy to see this initiative. She asked what response the sponsors have seen from administrators.

- A. Lapehn stated the first letter addressing this issue was sent on behalf of COLA in 2014 to President Emeritus Skorton. In regards to President Garrett, she has stated that she believes labor practices are acceptable at the Qatar campus.
- There was a motion to move this to Business of the Day.
- The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.
- Wyatt Nelson '16 stated that this issue illustrates a dodgy administration. He pointed out that the administration has received two separate letters from COLA, yet they have refused to do a thorough investigation through the Labor Rights Consortium or any other organization.
- M. Stefanko stated that of all the reasons the administration should not investigate this issue, none have been shown to be well intentioned.
- M. Ferrer stated he is a board member of workers right consortium, an independently funded organization founded by students. As compared to past investigations, he believed investigating Qatar would not be excessively costly.
- S. Tayal stated that as an Indian, and the International liaison, he favors this resolution because of the fact that Qatar violates many Indian rights. He asked about addressing the issue further.
- A. Lapehn stated that COLA has and can do a majority of the work, but having the Assembly as an ally would provide greater support for this challenge.
- Amy Methven '19 stated that other schools have had investigations in Qatar that have revealed harsh realities.
- There was a motion to call the question.
- The resolution was adopted by a vote of 24-1-0, with two community votes in favor.

J. Battista adjourned the meeting to Executive Session at 6:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Peter Biedenweg  
 Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies